

**Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Paine, September 6, 1807, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO THOMAS PAINE J. MSS.**

Monticello, September 6, 1807.

Dear Sir, —I received last night your favor of Aug. 29, and with it a model of a contrivance for making one gun-boat do nearly double execution. It has all the ingenuity and simplicity which generally mark your inventions. I am not nautical enough to judge whether two guns maybe too heavy for the bow of a gun-boat, or whether any other objection will countervail the advantage it offers, and which I see visibly enough. I send it this day to the secretary of the Navy, within whose department it lies to try & to judge it. Believing, myself, that gun-boats are the only *water* defence which can be useful to us, & protect us from the ruinous folly of a navy, I am pleased with everything which promises to improve them.

The battle of Friedland, armistice with Russia, conquest of Prussia, will be working on the British stomach when they will receive information of the outrage they have committed on us. Yet, having entered on the policy proposed by their champion “war in disguise,” of making the property of all nations lawful plunder to support a navy which their own resources cannot support, I doubt if they will readily relinquish it. That war with us had been predetermined may be fairly inferred from the diction of Berkley's order, the Jesuitism of which proves it ministerial from it's being so timed as to find us in the midst of Burr's rebellion as they expected, from the contemporaneousness of the Indian excitements, and

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of the wide & sudden spread of their maritime spoliations. I salute you with great esteem & respect.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson further wrote to Paine:

“ Washington, Oct. 9, '07.

“ Dear Sir,—Your 2d letter on the subject of gunboats came to hand just before my departure from Monticello. In the meantime, the inquiry into the proposition had been referred, agreeably to our usage, or to reason, to the practical persons of the department to which it belonged, deemed most skilful. On my arrival here, I found the answers of the persons to whom it was referred, the substance of which I now enclose you. I am not a judge of their solidity, but I presume they are founded, and the rather as they are from officers entirely favorable to the use of gunboats.

“We have as yet no knolege of the arrival of the *Revenge* in England, but we may daily expect to hear of it; and as we expected she would be detained there & in France about a month, it would be a month hence before we can expect her back here. In the meantime, all the little circumstances coming to our knolege are unfavorable to our wishes for peace. If they would but settle the question of impressment from our bottoms, I should be well contented to drop all attempts at a treaty. The other rights of neutral powers will be taken care of by Bonaparte & Alexander; and for commercial arrangements we can sufficiently provide by legislative regulations. But as the practice of impressment has taken place only against us, we shall be left to settle that for ourselves; and to do this we shall never again have so favorable a conjuncture of circumstances. Accept my friendly salutations & assurances of great esteem & respect.”